

Winged Monument to CRISTOBAL Colon
Project for Barcelona 1976



CHRISTO

URBAN PROJECTS

A SURVEY

**The Institute of Contemporary Art
Boston, Massachusetts
May 9 to July 1, 1979**

**Laguna Gloria Art Museum
Austin, Texas
August 25 to October 14, 1979**

**Corcoran Gallery of Art
Washington, D.C.
November 10, 1979 to January 4, 1980**

Forward

Christo's art has been a particularly visible presence on the international art scene for almost two decades. While this is in part a result of its formal and conceptual richness, it is also because of the huge scale of projects such as *Valley Curtain*, *Wrapped Coast* and *Running Fence* and the enormous forces brought together to realize them. Christo's art has more aspects to it than those seen in these transformations of landscape. This exhibition presents for the first time another, equally compelling aspect of the artist's work: projects for city spaces. In this survey extending from the beginnings of this segment of Christo's production to the most recent project, the *Wrapped Reichstag*, we can trace the formation of an extraordinary, beautiful body of work.

I would like to thank the following for their assistance in making this exhibition a reality: Pamela Allara for her catalogue essay; Gillian Levine and Elisabeth Sussman for help with many of the practical details of the exhibition; Sylvia Steiner for the design of this handsome publication. We are grateful also, to the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency, for a grant in partial support of the exhibition.

Finally, I would like to thank the lenders to the exhibition for their generosity in making their possessions available to us: Mr. Stephen S. Alpert; Mr. and Mrs. Armand Bartos; Mr. Peder Bonnier; Mr. Serge De Bloie; Mr. Ulrich Franzen; Mr. Raymond E. Gerson; Mr. Graham Gund; Mr. Arnold Herstand; Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kardon; Landfall Press Inc.; Jacques and Laurie Mallet; Dr. Carolina de Molinari; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Mr. Harrison Rivera-Terreux; Mrs. Joan Sonnabend; Marjorie and Anselm Talalay; The Museum of Modern Art; Mr. Harry Torczyner.

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Christo and Urban Space

From the beginning of his career, Christo has designed projects for the urban environment, although it is his more massive rural projects that have received greatest public attention. A city resident throughout his life, Christo in his art has been concerned with the modern urban milieu. By changing one aspect of this environment, he changes our relationship to it, causing us to reconsider established perceptions. The central notion which informs Christo's work is transformation through the processes of wrapping or blockading. Like Marcel Duchamp, he creates a "new thought" for an object by altering accepted meaning and use. Because of practical circumstances Christo's projects are dismantled after completion – although the artist would like to see them permanently realized. Nevertheless, in the course of planning they inspire a family of related work of great beauty: models, drawings, collages, photographs, movies and books.

Because urban space is built space, Christo's projects focus on architectural concerns: form, scale, structure, spaces. Carl Albrecht Haenlein has recently argued that Christo's work presents a polemic for an "alternative" architecture through which traditional building forms can be re-vitalized.¹ When, for example, Christo wraps a building, the separate units merge into amorphous spatial compartments which deny traditional distinctions between architectural elements and call for a new flexibility not just in ground plan but in ideas about architectural function generally. Christo's works, of course, are deliberately non-functional; nevertheless, they do provide fertile thought for the architect who wishes to move beyond the stereotypes of much modern building.

In his consideration for the urban environment, Christo has produced projects not only for wrapping buildings, but also for wrapping bridges, monuments, walls, streets, parks or even air. Within his varied production, however, the idea of transformation remains constant. The earliest works in this exhibition, the four projects for the *Wrapped Public Buildings* from 1961-3 are the ideational prototypes from which nearly two decades of work will emerge. Just as the many studies Christo makes for a project all convey individual aspects of the idea, so Christo's various projects, whether realized or not, build on one another, creating ever widening constellations of meaning. The recent projects have become



Wall of Oil Drums - The Iron Curtain - June 27, rue Visconti, Paris, 1962

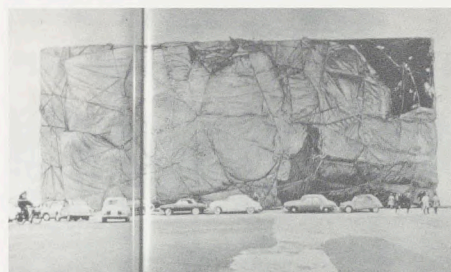
1. Carl Albrecht Haenlein, "Christo's Alternative Architecture," *Architektur Raume Projekte*, Munchen, Galerien Maximilianstrasse, 1978, n.p.



Wrapped Public Building, project for the Ecole Militaire, 1961

truly epic in scope. The three currently in process each represent the altering of a different type of structure – a monument (*Wrapped Monument to Christobal Colón, project for Barcelona, 1976-9*), a bridge (*The Pont Neuf Wrapped, project for Paris, 1974-9*), and a public building (*Wrapped Reichstag, project for West Berlin, 1973-9*) – and demonstrate the broad range of concerns in Christo's art.

The Wrapped Building Projects



Project for a Wrapped Public Building, October 1961

The early photo-collages of wrapped structures dating from 1961 form the nucleus of Christo's public art. For the photomontage *Project for a Wrapped Public Building, 1961*, Christo built a model, photographed it and superimposed its image on another photograph of an ordinary street scene. This technique of composite imagery, which can be found in the history of photography from the 1860's onwards, was employed as a conscious aesthetic means for the first time by the Dadaists. In 1931, Raoul Hausman, an original member of the Berlin Dada group, stated that the purpose of photomontage was to effect "fundamental, revolutionary change," and that the Dadaists were the first "... to use photography as a material to create an entirely new entity with the aid of very different structures that were often whimsical and antagonistic..."² The startling juxtaposition of two or more real objects in an irrational or unexpected way forces the viewer to go beyond visual fact to forge a new meaning from diverse elements. Christo's use of the collage technique has a similar effect, but his collages are actual proposals, meant to bring the irrational into the real world. Rather than stressing the jarring juxtaposition of elements, Christo integrates his packages into the environment with great subtlety, so that he creates not only an illogical situation, but one which at the same time appears to be factual.

The juxtaposition of the unexpected and the commonplace in *Wrapped Public*

Building is Christo's central expressive means. The change stuns the viewer, and at this point, when our conventional thought patterns are suspended, Christo offers new possibilities: in a statement accompanying the photomontage the artist writes: "The packaged public building can be used as:

1. Stadium with swimming pools, football field, Olympic arena or hockey and ice-skating rink.
2. Concert hall, conference hall, planetarium or exhibition hall.
3. Historical museum of ancient and modern art.
4. Parliament or prison."

Christo implies that once wrapped, a building suggests a vast, interior space of infinite possible use. Normal distinctions between functions are obliterated – just as the building's outlines are blurred – and new connections, possibly subversive (parliament = prison), can be made.

As with all of Christo's work, vision is tied to concrete fact, and in his statement the artist elaborates on the quantities of materials needed and the nature of the space, even though, as yet, no specific building is designated. In the future all of Christo's projects will be designed for specific sites. In *Wrapped Public Building, Project for the Wrapping of the Ecole Militaire, 1961*, Christo cut out the photograph of the model and inserted it into a vista of Paris seen through the base of the Eiffel Tower. The project has become a specific proposition, dramatically vivifying the scale, spaces and patterns of the city; in the photo-collage the network of knotted string binding the wrapping around the building echoes the majestic webbed arches of the Eiffel Tower.

Although the idea of wrapping a large scale structure emerges here for the first time, the concept of wrapping is present in the earliest works Christo executed after his arrival in Paris in 1958. At that time, he became associated with the New Realist movement headed by the critic Pierre Restany. Building on the Dada idea of the found object, the New Realist artists, such as Yves Klein, Martial Raysse, Arman and Daniel Spoerri, used objects from the surrounding environment – "contemporary nature." By isolating them and "presenting" them rather than representing them, familiar objects could be contemplated in all of their strangeness. Christo's *Inventory* (1958), a group of wrapped bottles, is similar in intent to Arman's freezing of randomly arranged objects or Spoerri's preserved remnants of meals.

Although he was able to develop the idea of wrapping much further, the association with the New Realists was important for Christo, confirming his predilection for integrating art with the environment. And while Christo's reputation rests in considerable measure on spectacular projects in rural settings, such as *Running Fence* in California or *Valley Curtain* in Colorado, the larger body of his work is urban in concern. The 22 projects in this exhibition, spanning 18 years of work, demonstrate the depth and variety of Christo's concern with the spaces of the city.

Regardless of setting, wrapping and to a lesser degree blockading is central to Christo's art. By wrapping an object, one clothes it in such a way as to accentuate or enhance its general outline at the same time that details and structure are obscured. With great sensitivity Christo drapes an object and secures its wrap by a network of knotted rope. In its new guise, removed from its practical context, the object becomes an aesthetic form. Relieved of function, the object enters into a state of suspended animation. As David Bourdon has pointed out, the work, whatever its scale, seems to be encased in a chrysalis, suggesting a process of physical transition and metamorphosis.³ The wrapped object is inherently ambiguous; the process of concealment projects the tension of the unknown.

When Christo moved to New York in 1964, he responded to the vertical forms of the skyscrapers. A concern with aggrandized scale led logically to proposals for wrapping a number of these architectural structures. In *Two Wrapped Buildings in Lower Manhattan, project for New York, 1964-6*, the skyscrapers chosen for simultaneous wrapping, 2 Broadway and 20 Exchange Place, have contrasting outlines and relate in different ways to the surroundings. Nonetheless, the two wrapped buildings, nestled in the cluster of tall buildings at the tip of the island, are mysterious presences calling into question the actuality of this most familiar of all skylines. By altering one aspect of the environment, Christo changes our perception of the entire environment.

The second of the skyscraper projects, *Wrapped Building: Project for 1 Times Square, (Allied Chemical Tower) New York, 1968-75*, is located in the center of Manhattan. The former New York Times building was owned by Allied Chemical when Christo first proposed wrapping it. Unlike the Lower Manhattan Buildings,

3. David Bourdon has explored the implications and the artistic sources of wrapping in *Christo* (New York, 1969), 9ff.

2. Robert A. Sobieszek, "Composite Imagery and the Origins of Photomontage," (Part I), *Artforum* xvii, No. 1, Sept., 1978, 58.



LOWER MANHATTAN PACKED BUILDINGS (PROJECT) 28 BROADWAY and 28 EXCHANGING PLACE 1964-66

Two Wrapped Buildings in Lower Manhattan,
project for New York, 1964-66

the Times Square structure is a landmark; wedge-shaped, it points to the heart of urban activity. Christo was drawn to the possibility of wrapping a building at the vortex of urban space and created with the dark industrial fabric a shrouded presence. It is integrated into the visually busy urban activity by an extremely complex webbing of ties. The wrapped skyscraper is one of the few types in the exhibition which is presently without sequel for Christo has since turned his attention to other kinds of projects.

The Wrapped Museum

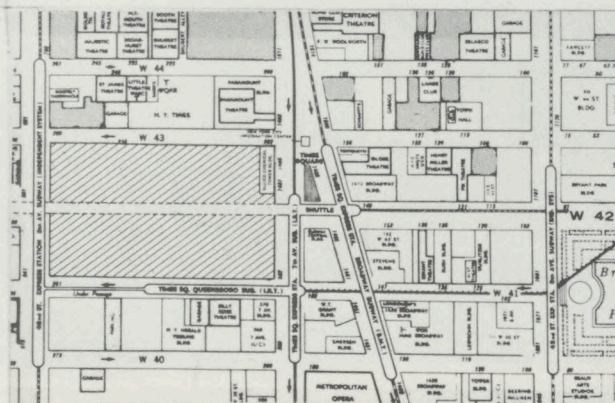
Christo's two other proposals for New York City, the wrapping of The Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, were, like the skyscraper projects, unrealized. The idea of wrapping a museum, beginning with the 1967 project for the National Gallery in Rome, is significant, for Christo takes a structure that literally houses the history and tradition of art, and, by wrapping, possesses it. The Museum of Modern Art project was in two parts: the wrapping of both the building and the sculpture garden, and the creation of a wall of oil drums across West 53rd Street outside the museum.

The oil drum part of the project for West 53rd Street is related to Christo's 1962 project, *Wall of Oil Drums - The Iron Curtain* in the Rue Visconti in Paris. Like wrapping, the oil drum wall is an interdiction of practical function. Blocked by a large stack of multicolored oil drums, the street was to have been inaccessible by pedestrian or vehicular traffic; attention would be focused on both the abstract play of the horizontal and vertical shapes of the urban ensemble and, more importantly, on the unsettling nature of the situation. Christo's use of barriers has been primarily in his ex-urban projects where barriers such as *Valley Curtain* and *Running Fence* have interrupted the landscape. The barrier of stacked oil drums, like the wrapped object, has been a fertile concept for Christo. Although oil drums were originally selected as structural units primarily because of cheapness and availability, it would be difficult to imagine currently a more appropriate symbol for shifting world politics. The connection between oil and international influence is made apparent in Christo's use of the mastaba form in his projects for Houston (1969) and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, (1977). In 1968, the artist expressed his desire to present something which is "... not an image, but the real thing — like the pyramids in Egypt ..."⁴ Christo's



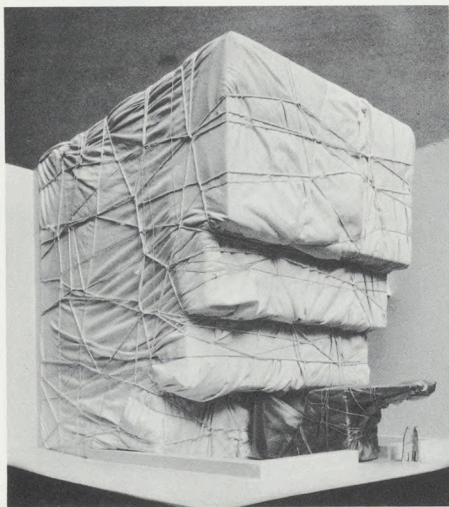
Christo 1968

PACKED BUILDING / PROJECT FOR 1 TIMES SQUARE, ALLIED CHEMICAL TOWER N.Y.



Wrapped Public Building, project for One Times Square, (Allied Chemical Tower), New York, 1968-75

4. Quoted in Lawrence Alloway, *Christo*, New York, 1969, xi.



Model for Wrapped Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1967



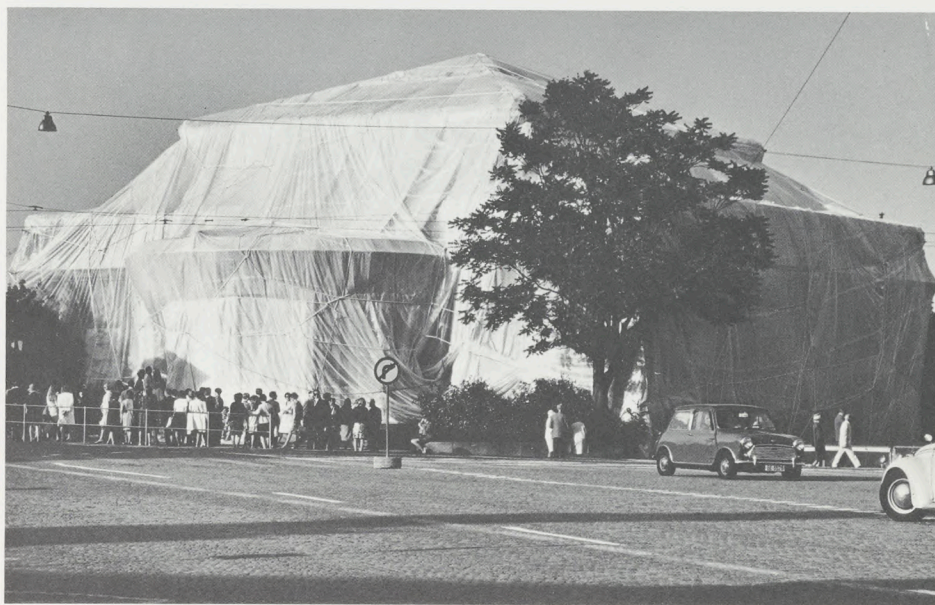
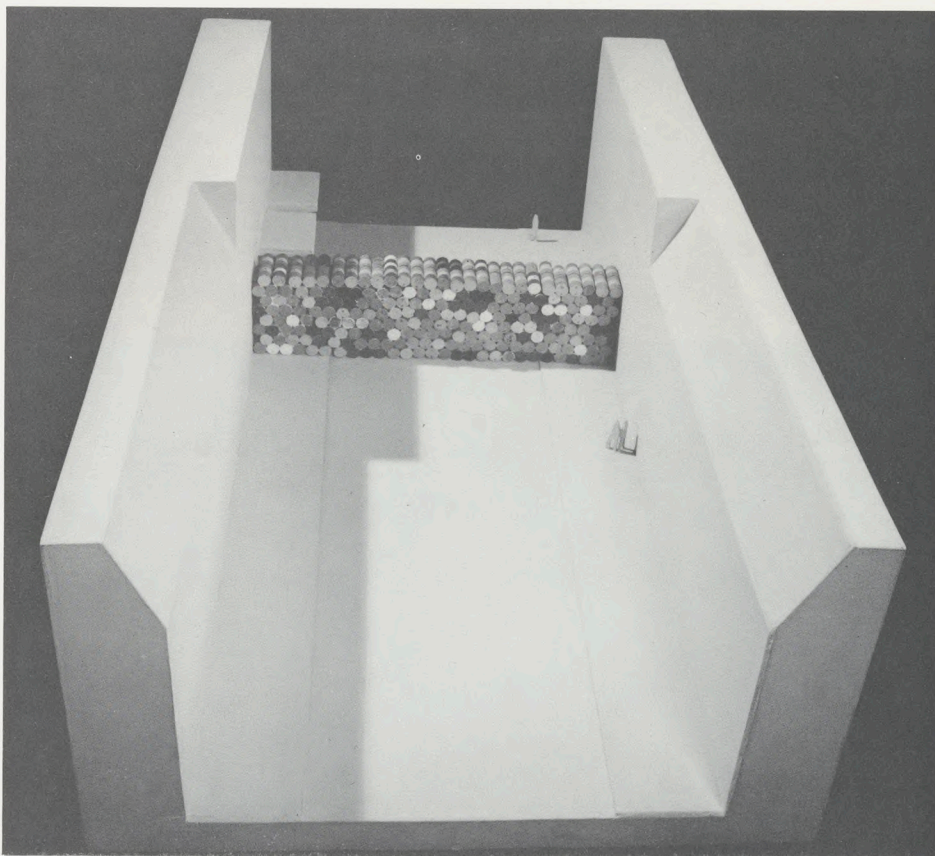
Wrapped Sculpture Garden, project for The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1968

Abu Dhabi mastaba will bring the ancient pyramids up to date, by creating a monumental, permanent form using oil drums instead of stone.

While practical problems prevented the realization of the New York museum projects, the two buildings which Christo has been able to wrap are both museums: The Kunsthalle in Berne, Switzerland (1968) and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (1969). The Kunsthalle was wrapped on the occasion of the museum's 50th anniversary exhibition, *Twelve Environments*. Christo was attracted by both the history of the building – it was founded by artists and had a tradition of exhibiting progressive art – and its site, on high cliffs overlooking a river. The use of light-colored fabric and a network of ropes emphasized the volume of the building, as well as the ambiguity of its presence in its spectacular setting. By contrast, Christo considered the Museum of Contemporary Art to be the most banal of structures in the most mundane of environments, and wrapped it in a dark green tarpaulin with widely spaced ropes which projected its box-like proportions. Having realized these projects, Christo is no longer drawn to the museum type as a subject for wrapping, now preferring governmental or other public buildings in which a greater tension exists between art and the everyday world. More than fifteen years after his initial photo-collage, Christo presently seeks to wrap a structure heavily charged with symbolism, the Reichstag.

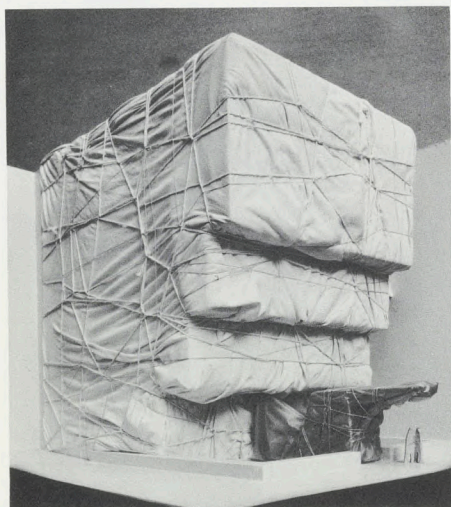
Because of its scale, use of the forces of industrial technology and, increasingly, social processes, Christo's art has developed a public character that is essentially theatrical: from preparation and construction (opening scenes) through realization (climax) to the epilogue of dismantling. In its inception, Christo's work had close connections with the theatre, which he studied both in Sofia and in Prague. As Stephen Prokopoff pointed out in his 1968 essay on the artist, the Russian post-Constructivist dramatic tradition provided Christo with "... both a freedom of scale and a sense of the stage as an environment that he now sees as directly preparing the way for his later work."⁵ The fact that Christo helped stage several plays by Vladimir Mayakovsky while studying at the E.F. Burian theatre in Prague is significant for it suggests that Christo's artistic direction was influenced by the art of the Russian Revolution, with its concern for "real materials

Model for 441 Structure The Wall (53rd Street between 5th and 6th Avenues), project for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1968



Wrapped Kunsthalle, Berne, 1968

5. Christo: *Monuments and Projects*, Philadelphia, The Institute of Contemporary Art, 1968, n.p. essay by Stephen Prokopoff. The exhibit, organized by the current director of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, was the first major exhibit of Christo's work in the United States.



Model for Wrapped Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1967



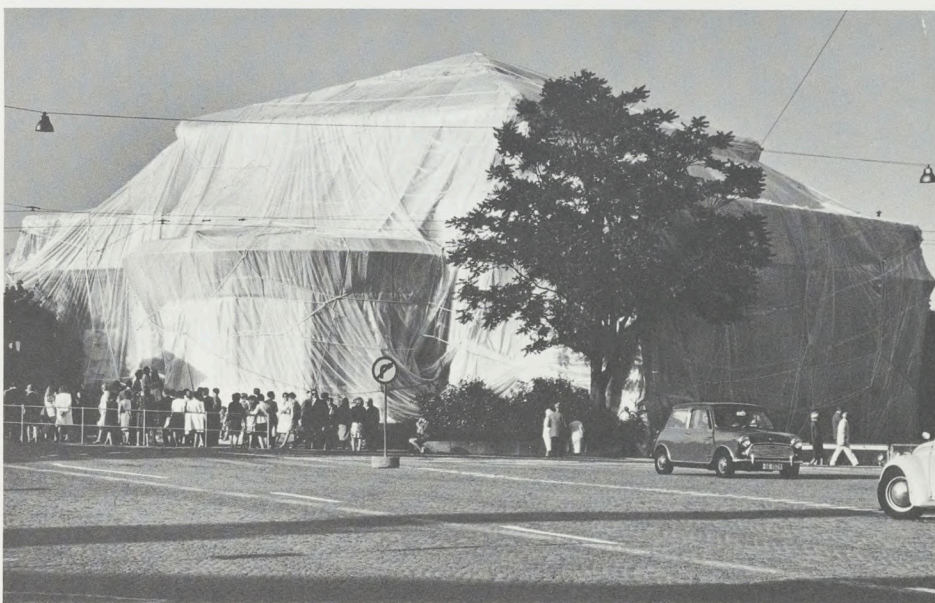
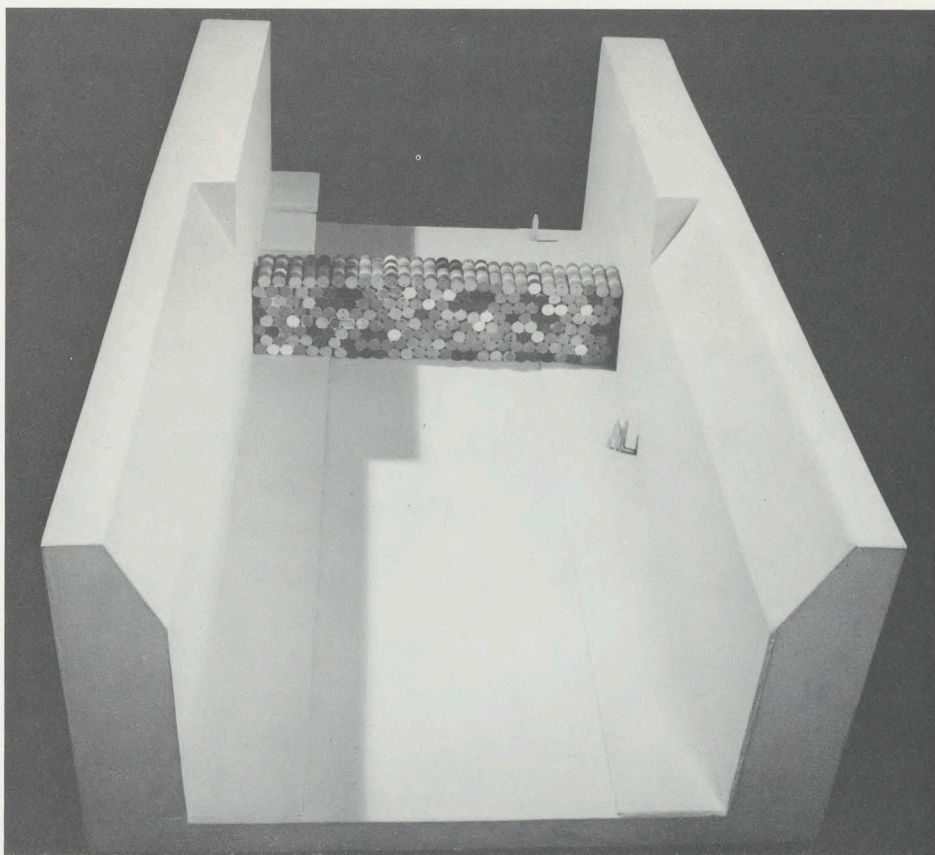
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5,600 Cubic Meter Package, Kassel, West Germany, 1968

and real spaces'' as described by Vladimir Tatlin. Although Christo had only a general familiarity with Russian revolutionary art, certain formal similarities exist between Christo's use of materials and, for instance, Tatlin's stage set for the opera *Ivan Susanin* (1913), which employed a backdrop of white cloth draped in abstract patterns.⁶ In general, the post-revolutionary concept of the artist as a worker, employing modern technology to bring art to the people, is a precedent for Christo's method. His proposals can be considered propaganda in a sense, but for art, not for political ideology.

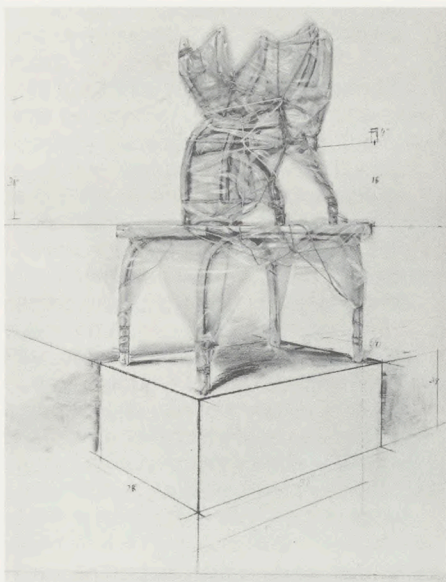
The negotiations and maneuvers leading to the realization of the work are a social process, as important to Christo as the visual aspects of the work itself, for they require people to consider art in the context of life. Christo's art encompasses effort from various groups in society, many of whom have had no previous experience in art. Christo welcomes the difficulties attendant to the realization of his projects, whether technological, legal or social, because they broaden the range of participation. Appropriately, participation is closely documented along with technological detail in the studies and summaries of each project.

The conjunction of great size and non-function emphasizes Christo's profound concern with the absurd; situations are created in which an enormous effort is directed to a temporary, non-utilitarian end, an activity which by analogy suggests the arbitrary nature of many of our supposedly useful routines. The absurd in its frustration of utility directs our attention to art.

Wrapped Monuments

The wrapping of a number of urban monuments over the past few years forms a class of work separate from building transformations. The monuments, while for the most part large, are nevertheless not as overwhelming presences as the wrapped buildings: they are closer to sculpture than architecture. In this regard they may be thought of as a monumental continuation of Christo's earliest wrapped forms on a small scale – familiar objects such as furniture (*Wrapped Chairs and Tables*) and other everyday items. An important distinction, however, is that Christo's monuments are not individual forms but rather elements in a civic ensemble. As such, they are freighted with more complex meanings

6. Camilla Gray, *The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1863-1922*, plate 18. Werner Spies, in his essay in *The Running Fence Project: Christo* (New York, 1977), makes a similar connection.

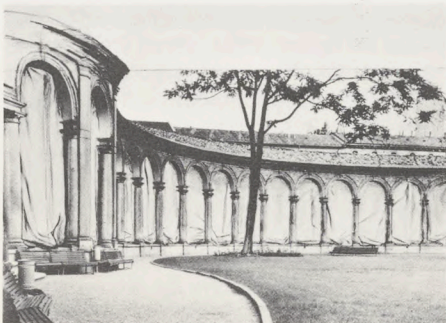


Wrapped Chairs and Table, project, 1965

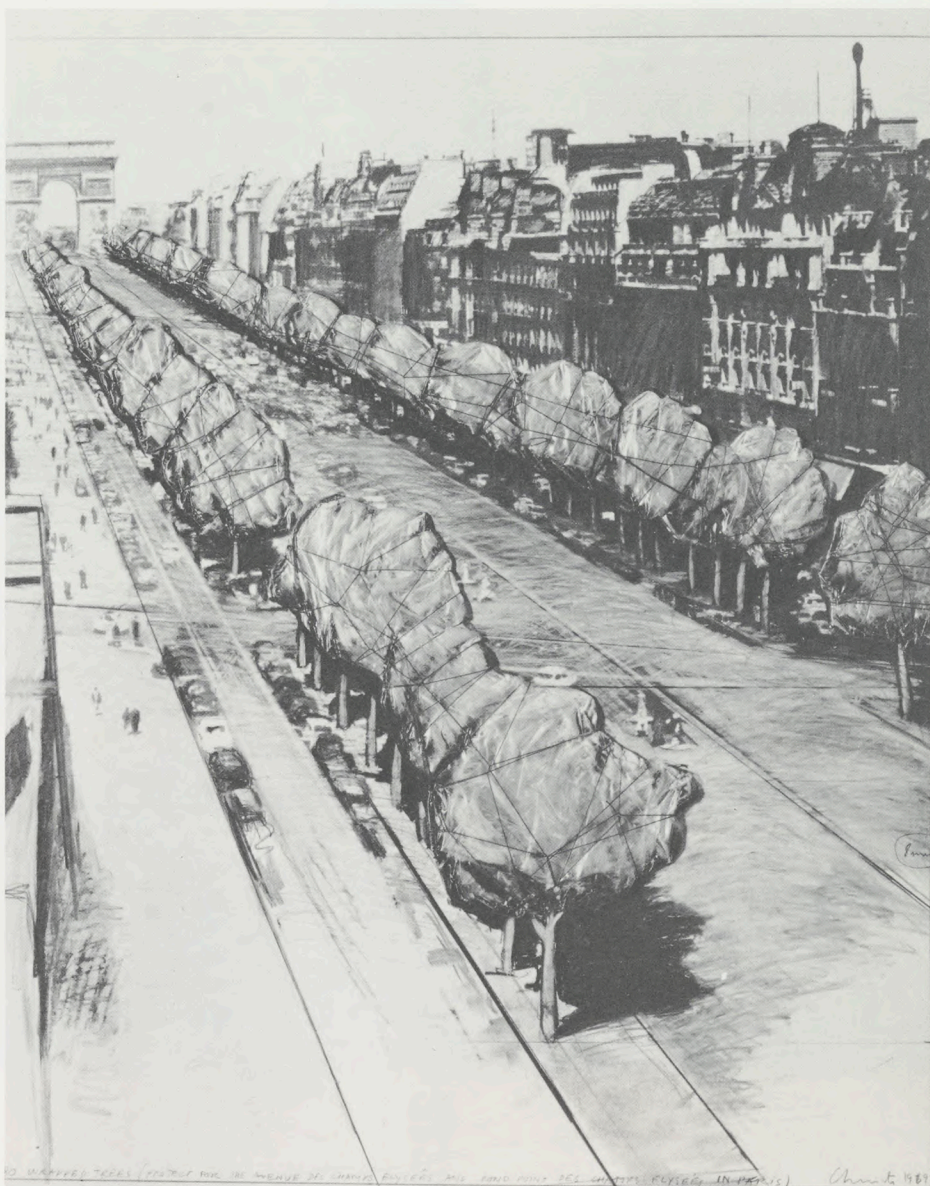
and associations than the early sculpture and relate directly to their urban context. The process of wrapping thus transforms not simply banal items but forms invested with historic, civic and political connotations.

The initial efforts in working with urban forms were the wrapping in 1968 of a medieval tower and a Baroque fountain in Spoleto in conjunction with the "Festival of the Two Worlds" established by Gian Carlo Menotti. In addition to the creation of two exceptionally lovely sculptural forms, the contemporary modification of historic structures was the principal factor in these instances.

In 1970 Christo proposed a plan to wrap the Arco de La Pace in Milan and to hang curtains in the Rotunda but was refused the necessary permits. The studies for the Rotunda are particularly beautiful. The hanging drapes that block passage through the arches are especially effective for they subvert the primary visual characteristic of the structure – a regular sequence of arches – creating an image like that of an architectural memory. More specifically, the image relates to that of the store fronts Christo made some years earlier which



Curtains for La Rotonda, project, Milan, 1970



380 Wrapped Trees, project for the Champs Elysées, Paris, 1969



Wrapped Monument to Vittorio Emanuele,
Piazza del Duomo, Milan, 1970

suggested the presence of mysterious, hidden activity behind their curtained fronts.

In the same year Christo began to work on another project – this time successfully realized – in Milan. In the center of the Piazza del Duomo, situated before the Milan Cathedral, stands a monumental statue of Vittorio Emanuele II, symbol of a unified Italy. To Christo, the conjunction of statue and cathedral demonstrated the continuing battle between church and state in Italy. The Piazza del Duomo is connected via the Galleria with the Piazza Scala, site of the opera house, wherein stands a monument to Leonardo da Vinci, a crowning figure in the histories of Milan and Italian art. Christo's draping obscures all detail of the originals, transforming them into works of a different aspect. The statues retain anthropomorphic shape, but other meanings can be imagined in the clusters of fabric and binding. Through wrapping Christo subsumes symbolic intent and creates new forms of great expressiveness.

Both monuments, made more evident by wrapping, became publicly inflammatory. The Vittorio Emanuele monument was scaled by strikers, who found it a dramatic political platform; the Leonardo da Vinci monument was set on fire by a group of unemployed peasants from Southern Italy. Christo is consciously political: by working with civic structures bearing symbolic freight, it is inevitable that his art incites responses.

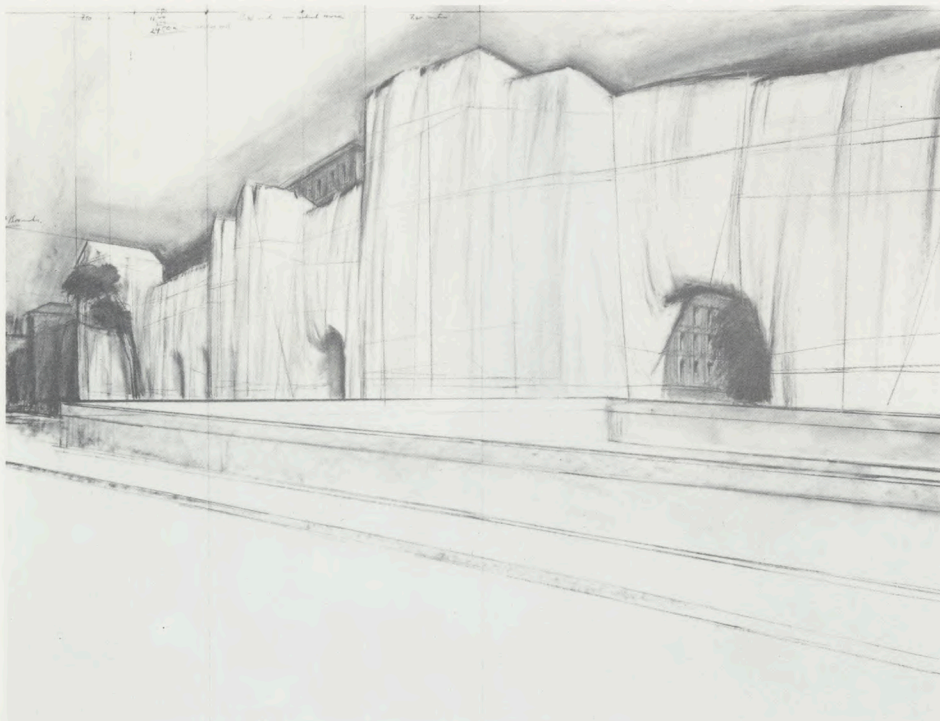
Christo's current project is for the wrapping of the Christopher Columbus monument in Barcelona. Why choose a project in Barcelona rather than, for instance, in London? For Christo, after the original proposal for the *Wrapped Public Building*, ideas have arisen from concrete situations rather than *a priori*. In this instance, the art dealer and publisher Juan de Muga, suggested that Christo explore a project in the area. Christo selected the monument of *Christobal Colón*, a poignant symbol for Spaniards, for Columbus personifies Spain's imperialistic ambitions in the New World, a continent now lost. Christo's challenge was to transform the monument, in which the explorer stands atop a globe, the pinnacle of a tall column. The statue is located in a square close to the harbor. The first study, a painted postcard, shows Christo approaching the problem aesthetically, carefully balancing color and shape relationships between the white draped fabric and the rust colored surrounding buildings. The view Christo favors is an unusual one from above, seen from a cable car which travels between the castle on the hill and the harbor. Although the permits for the wrapping have not been granted as yet, the project

Wrapped Monument to Leonardo da Vinci, Piazza Scala, Milan, 1970



Wrapped Monument to Christobal Colón, project for Barcelona, 1978

The Wall, project for a Wrapped Roman Wall, Porta Pinciana, Rome, 1974



The Wall, Wrapped Roman Wall, Rome, 1974

exists as a vivid image waiting, like Pygmalion's statue, to make the transition from the imagination to the real world.

Wrapped Bridges, Walls and Pathways

A major theme for more recent work is the passage, a penetration through a physical setting: the bridge, river and the path. The first exploration of this theme dates from 1963. At that time, Christo proposed wrapping the Ponte St. Angelo, which connects Rome with the Vatican. Attempts to obtain permits were turned down because of the Vatican's unease about the idea. Christo then turned his attention to another monument which determines the spatial character of the city, the Mura Aureliane or Marcus Aurelius Wall. The wall runs the length of the city, dropping steeply from the Villa Borghese; Christo proposed wrapping the section called Porta Pinciana, between the Via Vittorio Veneto and the Villa Borghese. The wall reaches 15 meters (approximately 40 feet) high at that point, forming a blockage in its urban surroundings, like the *Iron Curtain*, yet allowing passage through its arches. The dramatic obstruction of vision caused by the Porta Pinciana, according to Christo, is so familiar to the inhabitants of Rome as to go unnoticed. The wrapping emphasized the irregularity of the ancient wall and suggested a mysterious cataract in which the substance of stone was contradicted by the fluidity of the cascading fabric; this in turn was subverted by the static forms of the arched passages punctuating the molten drapery.

As in Milan four years earlier, the wrapped wall triggered political reaction, in this instance from extreme conservative elements who associated "radical" art with leftist politics and who bombed a portion of the wall, fortunately without doing significant damage. Nevertheless, the *Wrapped Roman Wall*, in place for 40 days in January and February of 1974, was remarkable for many. Christo has described the response of a taxi driver who spoke to him about the exhilarating effect of driving into the darkened passageways after viewing the expansive, light-filled exterior.⁷ Visually the effect of billowing, light-colored fabric is to dematerialize the forms underneath, a contradiction that is one of the most dramatic aspects of Christo's work.

In the *Wrapped Walk Ways*, Loose Park, Kansas City, Missouri (October 4-16, 1978), fabric was used as a sort of carpet to be walked on. The idea of creating a path of fabric originated in

7. Discussion with the artist, March 17, 1979, New York City.

Kassel, West Germany in 1968, when the fabric cut for the 5,600 cubic meter inflated air package was spread lengthwise on the grass prior to its erection. Christo's ideas were further developed on a trip through the Far East – Burma, Thailand and Cambodia – in 1969, on his return to the U.S. after the completion of the *Wrapped Coast* project in Australia. He noticed that in the Orient greater attention was paid to the varying textures and colors in the gardens than in the West. In Loose Memorial Park, the saffron colored fabric, uniting the formal French gardens in the north section and the informal English gardens in the south, not only established a changing relationship with the landscape, from contrast with the green grass in early October to harmony with the golden trees several weeks later, but it further suggested another kind of passage through the landscape – a waterway. In order to realize the Kansas City project, Christo had to convince the city administration to suspend an ordinance preventing the installation of works of art in the park. To Christo, the exercise of artistic free will is primary. Once a project is conceived that may be alien to established procedures, he then includes the mitigation of the obstacle as a part of the process of his art.

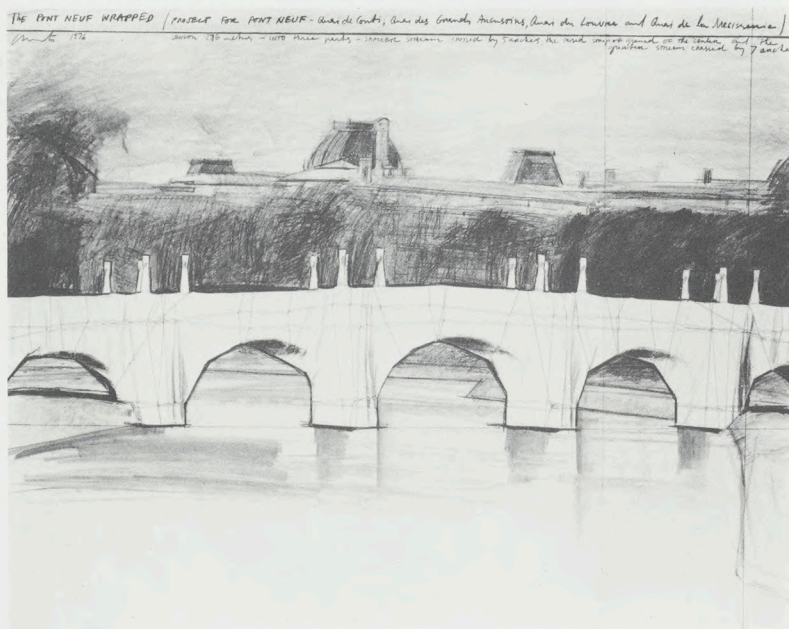
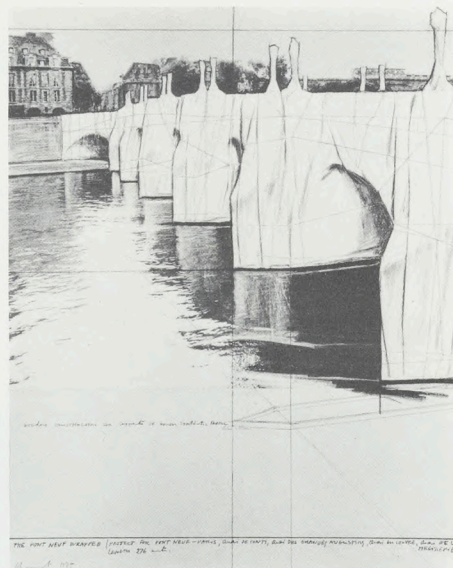
The current Pont Neuf project will be a further exploration of the idea of rivers and walkways. Christo has wanted to do an urban project stressing the importance of rivers to the cities of Europe; the Seine is particularly appropriate because, in Christo's words, it is a "human river," sufficiently narrow to be frequently spanned, and the major element in the definition of urban space in Paris. The project represents two orders of passage: that of movement over the bridge and of water under. Because the bridge is formed around the Ile de la Cité, the structure is in two parts.

The idea had its origins in the Ponte St. Angelo project of 1967. The Pont Neuf project was initiated in 1974. When Pontus Hulten, the Director of the Pompidou Center, in 1978 suggested an exhibition of Christo's work, the artist replied that he would prefer to do an urban project. Hulten agreed since the Pont Neuf is within walking distance of the museum and would contribute to his aim of bringing modern art to a large public. Christo's earlier Paris projects – the *Iron Curtain* in the Rue Visconti (1962) and the unexecuted proposal, *380 Wrapped Trees* (Project for the Avenue des Champs Elysees and Rond Pont des Champs Elysees, 1969) – provide a contrast with the more recent work. In the Rue Visconti, Christo obstructed passage, preventing use, whereas in the Pont Neuf project, he emphasizes the experience of passage. In the *380 Wrapped Trees* project, the wrapped procession of trees



Wrapped Walk Ways, Loose Park, Kansas City, Missouri, 1977-78

The Pont Neuf Wrapped, project for Paris, 1975



The Pont Neuf Wrapped, project for Paris, 1976

leading to the Arche de Triomphe forms an unsettling ceremonial passage through the city that calls into question our perception of the formal architectural plan of the surroundings. In the Pont Neuf project, the drape of the fabric over the exterior faces of the bridge calls attention to the flow of the river.

After it is wrapped, the function of the bridge will in no way be impaired. Pedestrian and vehicular traffic will continue normally. Even the lamps will continue to illuminate the structure at night since the fabric is sufficiently diaphanous to permit the passage of light. Christo's drawings suggest a couturier's feeling for fabric: the rather lumpy Henri IV structure is decked out in the most elegant of drapery for the city of fashion, with the "hems" neatly tucked under wooden supports at the water line. The overall aspect of the project is soft and romantic, echoing the mood of its urban ambience.

By contrast, Christo's third current undertaking, the wrapping of the Reichstag in Berlin, is somber and dramatizes the political tensions represented by that building. Christo's largest undertaking to date, the project's many beautiful drawings and a large model all forecast an elegiac, ghostly presence that is a fitting reflection of this building's history. The Reichstag itself is a heavy neo-Classical structure whose symmetrical forms are echoed in the wrapping; the towers, portico and finials are kept as discrete elements of the larger package while the monolithic regularity of the whole is further emphasized by the orderly disposition of the bands of ties.

The most significant aspect of the Reichstag project is that Christo has now chosen to wrap one of the prime symbolic structures in the world. Previous wrapped monuments have had local significance but the Reichstag clearly has a meaning that reaches to a kind of universality. Erected as the seat of government during the Weimar Republic, the Reichstag came to be regarded as the symbol of German democracy. However, it was burned, probably through Hitler's orders, in February of 1933 and was nearly destroyed a second time in 1945 during the battle of Berlin because it stood as the center of the Nazi government. Restored in 1960, the Reichstag, now the image of a vanquished Germany, is supervised by a commission of the four powers. Christo sees Berlin as a "microcosm of the political and social conditions existing today."⁸ These conditions are echoed in the building's location, close to the Berlin Wall, and isolated

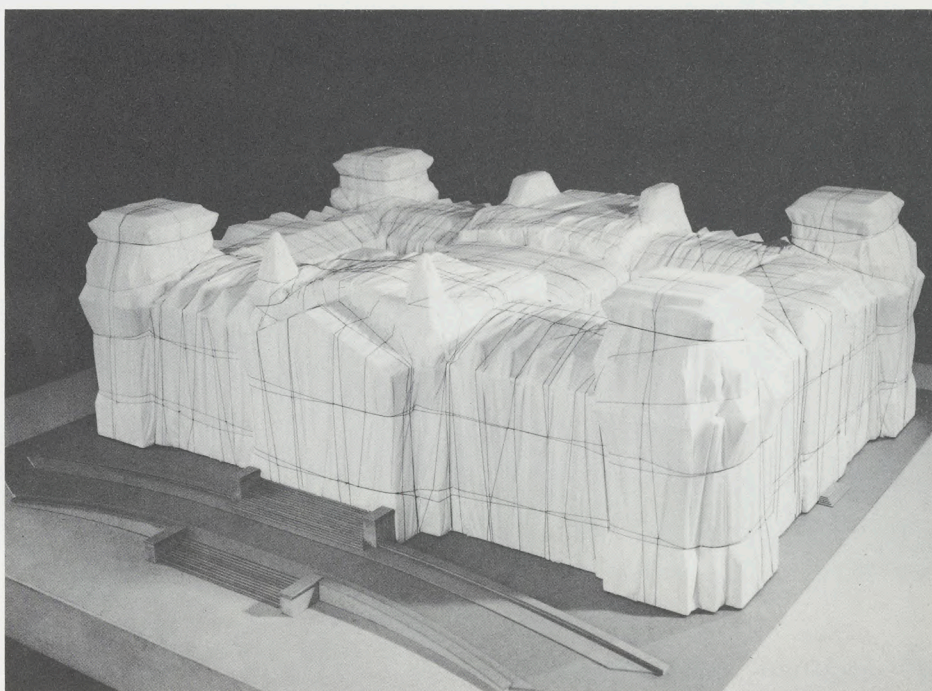
8. Christo, Verpacktes Denkmal, Enthüllte Gedanken, *Die Zeit*, 25.3.77

from the rest of the city by the surrounding Tiergarten in the same way that West Berlin is isolated from West Germany.

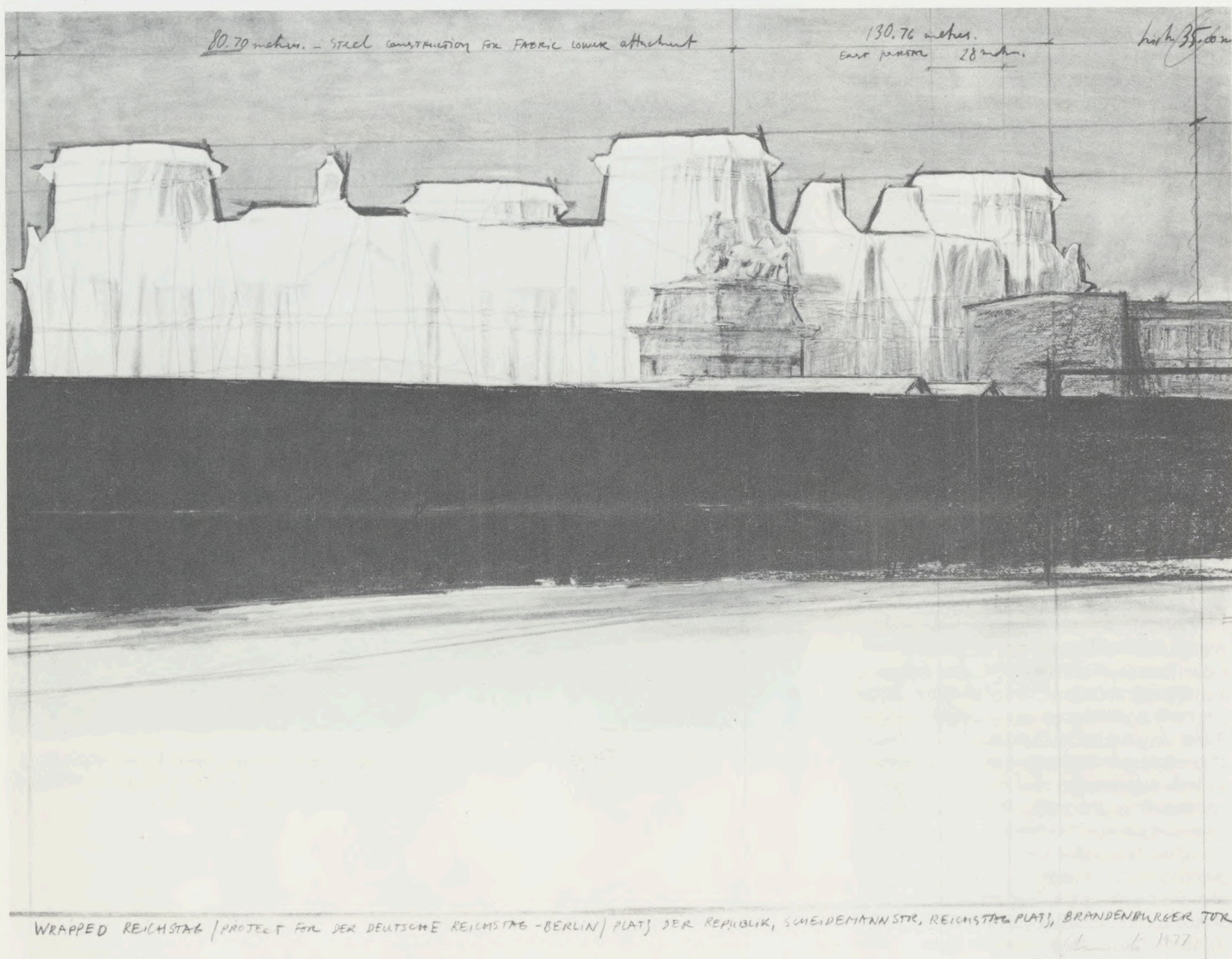
Increasingly, in recent years, Christo has become engaged with the social effort of realizing his large-scale projects. He conceives of the extraordinarily complex procedures required to accomplish his ends as a part of the work. The fact that the project to be accomplished may seem absurd to the functionaries of government only compounds the challenge. The record of negotiations is as carefully maintained as is the documentation of materials and structural forces. Clearly, the problems of obtaining permits are multiplied in a sensitive project like the wrapping of the Reichstag. Christo must first be granted permission by the Bundestag in Bonn, which controls the administration of the Reichstag. The current president of the Bundestag, Karl Carstens, denied the permit in May, 1977, stating that the project was "too controversial." Christo then adopted a new strategy. Assisted by the mayor of Berlin, Dietrich Stobbe, Christo organized a group of 12 influential leaders in the worlds of business, art and publishing in West Germany. This Kuratorium, based in Hamburg, in discussing the project with other people in their fields, will act as a powerful force to create a favorable climate for its implementation. The success of the project still rests with Germany's politics, but if a new president of the Bundestag is elected this year, he or she may be more favorably disposed to the proposal as a result of public discussion. When the government agrees to support the effort the plan will be submitted to a four power committee which is expected to respond affirmatively.

Although Christo modestly wants "to create excitement for the city," it is clear that the Reichstag project will be a major symbolic accomplishment. Wrapping will again focus our thought on the Reichstag and a turbulent era. The image of entombment comes easily to mind as well as the thought that the past is always with us. Christo's Reichstag stands as an apparition, a melding of some of the most fearsome and painful memories of the century. From its origins in a photo-collage, the wrapped building has grown to encompass the social and spiritual condition of modern man.

Pamela Allara
Stephen Prokopoff



(top) The Reichstag, West Berlin, 1894 (Paul Wallot, architect) (bottom) Model for Wrapped Reichstag, West Berlin, 1977



Wrapped Reichstag, project for West Berlin,
1977

Selected Chronology of Major Realized and Unrealized Projects

1935

Christo (Javacheff) born June 13 in Gabrovo, Bulgaria.

1952-56

Study at Fine Arts Academy, Sofia

1956

Work-Study at the Burian Theatre, Prague.

1957

One semester's study at the Vienna Fine Arts Academy

1958

Arrival in Paris.

First "Packages" and "Wrapped Objects."

1961

First project for the "Wrapping of a Public Building."

"Stacked Oil Drums" and "Dockside Packages" in Cologne Harbor.

1962

"Iron Curtain-Wall of Oil Drums" blocking the Rue Visconti, Paris.

"Stacked Oil Drums" in Gentilly, near Paris.

"Wrapping a Girl," London.

1963

First "Showcases."

1964

Establishment of permanent residence in New York City.

First "Store Fronts."

1966

First "Air Package" and "Wrapped Tree,"

Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

"42,390 Cubic Foot Package," Walker Art Center, Minneapolis School of Art

1967

Project for "Wrapped National Gallery," Rome.

Project for "Whitney Museum of American Art, Wrapped."

1968

"Wrapped Fountain" and "Wrapped Medieval Tower," Spoleto.

First packaging of a public building, "Wrapped Kunsthalle Berne."

"5,600 Cubic Meter Package," for Documenta 4, Kassel, an Air Package

280 feet high, 33 feet diameter,

"Corridor Store Front," total area: 1,500 square feet.

Project for a Wrapped Coast.

Projects for the Museum of Modern Art,

New York: wrapped museum,

wrapped sculpture garden, wall of oil drums (53rd Street).

Project for a wrapped bridge, Ponte St.

Angelo, Rome.

"1,240 Oil Drum Mastaba," Philadelphia, Institute of Contemporary Art.

"Two Tons of Stacked Hay," Philadelphia, Institute of Contemporary Art.

1969

"Wrapped Museum of Contemporary Art," Chicago.

"Wrapped Floor," 2,800 square feet of drop cloths, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

"Wrapped Coast-Little Bay-One Million Square Feet," Sydney, Australia.

Project for stacked oil drums "Houston Mastaba," Texas, 1,249,000 drums.

Project for "Closed Highway."

1970

Project for "Valley Curtain," Colorado, 1971, suspended fabric curtain.

Project for Milan: "Curtains for La Rotonda" and "Wrapped Arco de la Pace."

Project for "Wrapped Walk Ways" in Ueno Park, Tokyo, Japan and Sonsbeck Park, Arnheim, Holland.

"Wrapped Monuments," Milano: Monument to Vittorio Emanuele, Piazza del Duomo; Monument to Leonardo da Vinci, Piazza Scala.

1971-72

"Valley Curtain, Grand Hogback, Rifle, Colorado," width: 1,250-1,1368 feet, height: 185-36 feet.

1973

Project for "Running Fence," California.

Project for "Wrapped Reichstag," Berlin.

1974

"The Wall," wrapped Roman wall, Via Vittorio Veneto and Villa Borghese, Rome.

"Ocean Front," Newport, Rhode Island

Project for "The Pont Neuf, Wrapped," Paris.

1976

"Running Fence," Sonoma and Marin Counties, California: 18 feet high, 24½ miles long.

1976-79

Project for "Wrapped Reichstag," Berlin.

"Wrapped Monument to Christobal Colon," Project for Barcelona.

1977

Project for "Mastaba" in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, ca. 2 million oil drums.

1978

"Wrapped Walk Ways," Loose Memorial Park, Kansas City, Missouri

Catalogue

Dimensions are in inches; height precedes width precedes depth. Unless otherwise noted, work is lent by the artist.

Wrapped Reichstag, project for the Deutsche Reichstag, West Berlin, 1973-79 (in progress)

Model, 1977

fabric, twine, wood, cardboard, paint
Private collection

Drawing in Two Parts, 1979

15 x 96 and 42 x 96
pastel, charcoal, pencil, map

Drawing in Two Parts, 1979

15 x 96 and 42 x 96
pastel, charcoal, pencil, map

Drawing, 1973

36 x 60
pencil, colored pencil
lent by Mr. and Mrs. Ulrich Franzen

Drawing, 1977

42 x 65
pastel, charcoal, pencil
lent by Mr. Graham Gund

Collage in Two Parts, 1978

22 x 28 and 15 x 28
fabric, twine, pastel,
charcoal, map
lent by Mr. Stephen S. Alpert

Collage, 1979

28 x 22
fabric, twine, pencil, pastel, charcoal

Collage in Two Parts, 1979

11 x 28 and 22 x 28
fabric, twine, pencil, charcoal, map

Painted Photograph

9½ x 15
enamel, paint, pencil

Painted Photograph

9½ x 15
enamel, paint, pencil

Nine photographs

each 23 x 18

The Pont Neuf Wrapped, project for Paris, 1974-79 (in progress)

Drawing, 1979

42 x 96
pastel, charcoal, pencil
Private collection

Drawing, 1979

42 x 65
pastel, charcoal, pencil

Collage, 1977

22 x 28
fabric, twine, photostat, map,
pastel, crayon
lent by Mr. Stephen S. Alpert

Collage in Two Parts, 1976

15 x 28 and 22 x 28
fabric, twine, pastel, charcoal, pencil
lent by Mr. Raymond E. Gerson

Collage, 1976

22 x 28
fabric, twine, pastel, charcoal, pencil

Photograph

23 x 18

Wrapped Monument to Christobal Colon, project for Barcelona, 1976-79 (in progress)

Drawing in Two Parts, 1976

96 x 42 and 96 x 15
pastel, charcoal, crayons, technical data, tape
lent by Mr. Graham Gund

Drawing, 1976

65 x 42
pastel, charcoal

Altered Postcard, 1976

7¾ x 5½
enamel, paint, pencil
lent by Mr. Harrison Rivera-Terraux

Collage, 1978

28 x 22
fabric, twine, pastel, charcoal, pencil
lent by Mrs. Joan Sonnabend

Wrapped Walk Ways, Loose Park, Kansas City, Missouri, 1977-78

Preparatory work:

Drawing in Two Parts, 1978

15 x 65 and 42 x 65
pastel, charcoal, pencil, map

Collage in Two Parts, 1978

28 x 11 and 28 x 22
fabric, photostat, pastel, charcoal, map

Painted Photograph, 1978

9½ x 15
enamel, paint, crayon

Painted Photograph, 1978

9½ x 15
enamel, paint, crayon

Realization of the project:

3 Color Photographs
each 39 x 28

The Wall: Wrapped Roman Wall, Porta Pinciana, Rome, 1973-74

Preparatory work:

Drawing, 1974

36 x 60
pencil, crayon
lent by Mr. Peder Bonnier

Drawing, 1974

36 x 60
pencil, crayon

Drawing, 1974

36 x 60

Collage, 1974

28 x 22
fabric, twine, pencil, crayon

Collage, 1974

28 x 22
fabric, twine, pencil, crayon

Realization of the Project:

Two Photographs

each 8 x 10

Three Color Photographs

each 39 x 2 8

Wrapped Arco De La Pace, project for Milan, 1979

Collage, 1970

28 x 22
fabric, twine, crayon, pencil
lent by Marjorie and Anselm Talalay

Wrapped Monument to Vittorio Emanuele, Piazza del Duomo, Milan, 1970

Preparatory work:

Collage, 1970

28 x 22
fabric, twine, pencil, crayon
Private collection

Realization of the project:

Four Photographs

(2) 39 x 28 (2) 16 x 12

Wrapped Monument to Leonardo Da Vinci, Piazza Scala, Milan, 1970

Realization of the project:

Two Photographs

each 16 x 12

Color Photograph

39 x 28

Wrapped Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1969

Preparatory work:

Collage, 1968

28 x 22
fabric, twine, polyethylene, pencil, charcoal,
crayon
lent by the Museum of Contemporary Art,
Chicago
gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin A. Bergman

Drawing, 1968

28 x 22
pencil, crayon

Realization of the project:

Photograph

39 x 28

380 Wrapped Trees, project for the Avenue des Champs Elysées and Rond Point des Champs Elysées, Paris, 1969

Collage, 1969

28 x 22
polyethylene, twine, photostat, charcoal
lent by Mr. and Mrs. Armand Bartos

Wrapped Kunsthalle, Berne, 1968

Preparatory work:

Model, 1968
30 x 30 x 20
wood, fabric, twine
lent by Dr. Carolina de Molinari

Collage, 1968
28 x 22
fabric, twine
lent by Jacques and Laurie Mallet

Collage, 1968
28 x 22
fabric, twine, pencil, photostat

Collaged Photograph
20 x 15

Realization of the project:

Two Photographs
each 25 x 39

Wrapped Fountain, Piazza Mercato, Spoleto, 1968

Photograph
39 x 2 8

Wrapped Tower, Spoleto, 1968

Photograph
39 x 2 8

5,600 Cubic Meter Package, Kassel, West Germany, 1968

Preparatory work:

Model (hanging) 1968
100 x 20 x 20
polyethylene

Drawing - Collaged Photograph
28 x 22
photo, pencil

Model, 1968
30 x 20 x 36
plastified fabric, twine, wood

Collage, 1968
28 x 22
fabric, twine, pencil

Collage, 1968
28 x 22
fabric, twine, pencil

Drawing, 1968
20 x 15

Collaged Photograph
24 x 18

Realization of the project:

Color Photograph
28 x 28

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, projects, 1968

Model for Wrapped Sculpture Garden, 1968
14 x 48 x 24
fabric, twine, polyethylene, wood, paint

Model for 441-Barrel Structure the Wall (53rd Street between 5th and 6th Avenues)
14 x 48 x 24
wood, paint

Collaged Photograph
20 x 15

Collaged Photograph
20 x 15

Collaged Photograph
20 x 15

Collaged Photograph, 441-Barrel Structure the Wall (53rd Street between 5th and 6th Avenues), 1968
22 1/8 x 28 1/2
photomontage, enamel paint
lent by The Museum of Modern Art
gift of Louise Ferrari

Wrapped Whitney Museum of American Art, project, 1967

Model, 1967
20 x 19 1/2 x 22
canvas, twine, polyethylene, wood, paint

Collage
28 x 22
fabric, twine, pencil
lent by Landfall Press

Wrapped Teatro Nuovo, project for Spoleto, 1967-68

Model
36 x 28 x 14

Wrapped Public Building, One Times Square (Allied Chemical Tower), project for Times Square, New York, 1968-75

Model, 1968
27 x 20 x 31
wood, plastified fabric, polyethylene, twine, paint

Collaged Photograph, 1968
15 x 10

Collaged Photograph, 1968
15 x 10

42,390 Cubic Foot Package, Minneapolis, 1966

Preparatory work:

Collage, 1966
24 x 29
polyethylene, twine, pencil, charcoal
lent by Mr. Arnold Herstand

Drawing, 1966
22 x 28
gouache, enamel paint, pencil, charcoal
lent by Mr. Serge de Bloe

Realization of the project:

Color Photograph
39 x 28

Two Wrapped Buildings in Lower Manhattan, project for New York, 1964-66

Collage
28 x 22
photostat, fabric, twine
Private collection

Drawing
28 x 22
lent by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kardon

Wall of Oil Drums-The Iron Curtain-June 27, Rue Visconti, Paris, 1962

Preparatory work:

Collaged Photograph with Text
10 x 16

Realization of the project:

Photograph
28 x 22

Color Photograph
28 x 22

Wrapped Public Buildings, projects, 1961-63

Ecole Militaire, Paris, 1961
Collaged photograph with text
7 1/8 x 9 1/2

Public Building
collaged photograph with text
7 1/8 x 9 1/2

Public Building, 1963
Photomontage
13 x 36

Photographs by:

Klaus Baum
Ferdinand Boesch
Thomas Cugini
Raymond DeSeynes
Eeva-Inkeri
Jean-Dominique Lajoux
Ugo Mulas
Harry Shunk
Shunk-Kendar
Wolfgang Volz

